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## Echo

by [Saucery](#)

### Summary

Soon after Deaton begins training him, Stiles starts weaving talismans for the pack.

### Notes

Credit for the GIF goes to [this wonderful person](#)! The amazing Birddi has made [fanart](#), too, and there's even a [podfic](#) by the lovely dirtydirtychai! Not to mention a [Chinese translation](#) by Androyd! I am so blessed! FANDOM, YOU HAVE BLESSED ME!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

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"There is no love that is not an echo."

- Theodor Adorno.

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Soon after Deaton begins training him, Stiles starts weaving talismans for the pack. Talismans of cloth, with runes woven into their centers, threaded through with crystals and herbs and strips of pliable wood.

Before Derek quite notices it, they're hanging around the Hale house, as protection, circles and squares and pentagrams outside every door and window, every point of entry. There are some, he knows, around Scott's house, too. And Jackson's. And Lydia's. But the most, by far, surround Derek's home, and he finds himself puzzled by them, by how stealthily they seem to have crept onto his territory. Still, they remind him of his mother's charms, when she used to make them, so he lets them be.

The outdoor talismans are very large, ranging from the size of a notebook to the size of an optometrist's chart - but there are also smaller ones, for individual use, made for each of the pack's members to wear around their necks or on their arms.

Derek catches Stiles making them, sometimes, fingers cleverer than one would expect, an expression of fierce concentration on his face. Stiles weaves spells into them and blows his breath through them, and when Derek overhears Scott asking about it, Stiles replies that it's so his life-force and his goodwill are in every fiber, making of each talisman a ward, a shield, a blessing.

"Like the Mountain Ash," Scott says, with the air of one struck by an incredible epiphany, and Stiles snorts.

"Yeah. Like that."

It's not like that. Or, well, not just like that. There's an element of personalization involved. Derek knows it, because every werewolf's talisman differs in shape and in content; Erica's is a circle, while Boyd's is a square. One features feathers, the other does not. Derek's is a triangle and bears an uncanny resemblance to his triskele, inverted, with the spirals charted out in what appear to be sprigs of dried sage and nightshade.

That isn't the only thing that makes Derek's talisman unique, though. It's also knotted differently, and more thickly, than all of the others, with an unusually complex pattern in the middle of it that Derek can't make sense of. It... unnerves him, along with the constant scent of Stiles that accompanies the talisman, and, therefore, accompanies *him*.

And yet, when he demands explanations (for definitions of 'demand' that include slamming the boy into convenient walls), Stiles just quirks this mysterious little smile, pats Derek's shoulder and says, "Relax, buddy. You'll be safe."

*You'll be safe.*

And Derek doesn't realize what that means, not until he's struck by a hunter's bullet and, instead of being weakened, heals as quickly as he would from any ordinary wound. Quickly enough to make a clean getaway.

He doesn't realize what it means, until he gets a panicked call from Scott, saying that Stiles has collapsed and has been rushed to the hospital.

For symptoms of poisoning.

But none of the doctors can work out what the poison *is*, or why it's killing Stiles, and as a result, they can't treat him. By the time Derek gets there, they still haven't worked it out; the blood tests have returned normal. Inexplicably normal. All they can do is stand by and watch in horror as Stiles twists and turns on his gurney, foaming at the mouth, skin ashen and gleaming with death-sweat. Derek catches a glimpse of him, before he's wheeled off - just a glimpse - and feels a sickle-sharp swoop low in his belly, on the verge of severing something that he hadn't even known was there.

He escapes the accursed place. Feels his own heart thudding in him, like a drum. And somehow finds himself at the Stilinski house, in Stiles's bedroom, where Stiles's scent is still that of the living, not of the dying.

And then, he sees it.

The note.

There's a chit of paper, propped neatly atop the dresser, telling Derek that he should help himself to some wolfsbane antidote, preferably as soon as possible, there's a good sourwolf.

The antidote is in a small vial next to the note.

Derek drinks it. Without even checking if it's what Stiles says it is.

A few minutes later, there's another call from Scott, saying that Stiles has miraculously recovered. Hell, not only has he recovered, he's talking.

The fucking *brat*.

When Derek returns to the hospital, he merely finds Stiles sitting up in bed, smiling that same, mysterious smile - except that now it's more wan than anything else.

"I sent the rest of the pack away, even my dad," Stiles says, his hands resting calmly on his lap. They look thin. Blue-veined. Infuriatingly fragile. "I figured you'd wanna whale on me." He tilts his chin up, as if for a punch. "Go ahead."

Derek *wants* to. He genuinely does. But he's got limits, and apparently hitting someone on a goddamn hospital bed is one of them. He sits on the uncomfortably narrow chair by the bed, and glowers.

Stiles raises an eyebrow.

"Why?" Derek asks, eventually, the question pulled out of him like a hook from a fish's throat. Sticky. Bloody. Tangled up in bits of his own flesh. "How?"

Stiles smirks. "I'm like the Man in Black, dude. Poisoned, but not poisoned. You ever seen *The Princess Bride*? No? God, what're they teaching the kids, these days?"

"Stiles," Derek growls.

Stiles shrugs. "I transferred the effects of your poisoning to me. Uh. Just the effects, I mean, not the actual poison. Technically, I wasn't poisoned, so the doctors didn't know what the hell was going on." When Derek frowns, Stiles continues: "Heh. It's almost kinda cool. See, that talisman?" Stiles nods at the pendant around Derek's neck. "It fools nature into thinking that your body is my own. When you get poisoned, I get poisoned. Simple transference."

That's the how, but not the why. So Derek repeats it. "Why?"

"To buy you time. If you ever get injured, like that. With wolfsbane, or - or any number of things. That might take you down. You're the first line of defense, out there. You're the Alpha. You can't go down; if you go down, so does the rest of the pack. Which means I've gotta keep you going, y'know? Stronger than anyone else. Faster than anyone else. And I'll be fine, anyway, since the injuries aren't *really* mine. As long as you take your medicine on time."

"The effects of the poison transfer to you, but so do the effects of the remedy."

"Yep. Got it in one."

That still isn't the real answer to the question of why, although Derek can also tell that Stiles isn't lying. Stiles is telling the truth, but not the complete truth. It's in the too-even tone of his voice, in the too-swift flick of his eyes, away from Derek and back again.

"What if I can't get to a remedy in time?"

Stiles breathes. Another too-even breath. "You'll get there. You did, this time, and you didn't even know what you were looking for, when you went to my home. You went there on instinct. And your instinct was right."

"Why didn't you tell me? Beforehand? I'd have been prepared - "

"No, you would've just ripped the talisman off and handed it back to me. Because god forbid that anyone try to *help* Derek Hale, oh, no. The sky must clearly be falling." Stiles huffs wryly. "You've got a serious Solitary Angstbot syndrome, man. You oughta talk to Ms. Morrell about it."

This is ridiculous. Derek can't owe Stiles for something like this. He *can't*. His hand clenches around his talisman; he considers tearing it off.

"Don't," says Stiles, softly. His eyes glitter, witch-bright, certain with the knowledge of things beyond Derek's imagining. "Don't. Your pack needs you."

That isn't the complete truth, either.

But Derek's done pushing for answers. He isn't even sure he wants them, anymore.

When he leaves, the smell of fading sickness lingers on him. Stiles is healed, now, but that smell hasn't left Stiles's hospital room - the stench of a rotting wound, of death, of decay. A stench Derek remembers rising from himself, when Kate had shot him with a wolfsbane bullet. Ages ago, it seems. A whole year ago. So much has changed, since then.

*Your body is my own.*

That night, as he tries and fails to sleep, he presses his talisman close to him, still faintly carrying Stiles's unblemished scent, not that of the recent illness, not - not that.

He can hear the other talismans clacking together, quietly, outside the window and on the porch, like old bones stirred by a breeze.

Stiles is no longer the boy Derek knew. Slowly but surely, he is becoming *other*, a resident partly of this world and partly of another, filled with deep silences, like Deaton is. Filled to the brim, like a cup of wine, and yet, were Derek to put his mouth to it, he would find it dry. Utterly dry. Empty of everything.

That feeling of emptiness follows him into his dreams, fitful and strange, in which Stiles's pale limbs clack together like bones, and his voice whispers through the trees.

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**fin.**

## End Notes

The inverted triangle of Derek's talisman may signify a downward flow into a vessel of some sort, a transference from one to another. (The transference being from Derek to Stiles, of course, with the vessel being Stiles.) Sage is a purifying, protective agent; it wards off evil and has healing powers. Nightshade, while typically deadly, can be a powerful protection when used in conjunction with lunar magic (uh, werewolves, anybody?), and is known to soothe painful memories. Guess who has loads of painful memories? Yeah. Derek. Nightshade also aids in astral projection, or, in Derek's case, the projection of his pain and his injuries (onto Stiles).

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